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Antwerp: University Press Antwerp and London: Bloomsbury. 2015

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Review of *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape* / *La Dernière Bande* by Dirk van Hulle. Antwerp: Antwerp University Press and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. pp. 272, ISBN 978-1-47-253423-1.

The Making of Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape / *La Dernière Bande* is number three of the printed volumes which complement the online resources of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (BDMP). The BDMP brings together the extant manuscripts, scattered across many collections world-wide, relating to the creation of individual Beckett works, enabling a detailed comparison of the different stages of composition. Since, as Stan Gontarski has argued (1985), Beckett often undertook a process of vaguening or undoing as he shaped his texts, this project is a major resource for the Beckett scholar and for the field of genetic criticism more widely, allowing glimpses into how Beckett worked, and into the wealth of literary, artistic or philosophical references that do not always survive into the published versions, but that provide a rich hinterland of resonances and intertextual echoes.

The online BDMP, which requires individual or institutional subscription, allows different manuscript versions to be compared with visual ease and detail, and so it is useful to peruse the printed volume in tandem with the online resource, but the printed book also stands on its own, liberally illustrated by facsimile pages from the manuscript, typescript or proof text. What makes the BDMP so valuable is the scope of the project — which aims to digitize all of Beckett's available manuscripts and includes the Universities of Antwerp and Reading and the Harry Ransom Centre at the University of Texas as partners — and the expertise of its scholarly team. *The Making of Krapp's Last Tape*, authored by Dirk Van Hulle, co-director of the BDMP with Mark Nixon, is fascinating, authoritative and meticulous.

The book is divided into three sections: the first is a detailed description of the actual documents which make up the genetic history of *Krapp's Last Tape* (KLT) while the second section takes the reader through each version or stage of the text, and also compares the changes across the different versions in relation to specific scenes. This is an effective way of structuring what is an immense amount of material. The scholarship is impressive, marshalling letters, archival material and interviews in order to establish an authoritative chronology for the different versions, and also cross referencing this play with earlier Beckett texts or with texts that Beckett was writing around the same time. This provides an illuminating context for the work, and traces motifs and allusions from text to

text. The concept of layering or delving with its associations of geology and excavation is a particularly apt recurrent image. We know that *Krapp's Last Tape* was inspired by Irish actor Patrick Magee's "cracked voice" as Beckett listened to a recording of the BBC broadcast of Magee reading extracts from his novel *Molloy* in December 1957, but this book offers much more detailed information about the context of its creation between Beckett's second radio play, *Embers*, and the English translation of the novel *l'Innommable*. Van Hulle traces the dense texture of allusions in KLT including Shakespeare, Yeats, Racine, Bergson, Petrarch, Montaigne to mention only a few, contributing to our sense of the rich seams of literary or philosophical reference that haunt Beckett's creative work. Manicheism is discussed, but Heraclitus is also invoked in relation to the role of the elements and their transmutability.

Such a wealth of detail and scholarship is not always easy to absorb, but Van Hulle's Introduction offers a guide to the reader about how to negotiate the diversity of material in the book, and defines genetic criticism as not only about the bibliographical description and chronology of manuscript texts, but also about the dynamics of the creative process. The Introduction therefore also offers an interpretation of the play based on cognitive philosophy, or theories of how our minds work. In particular, Van Hulle invokes the concept of the enactive mind where cognitive processes operate through embodied action, such as Krapp's interaction with the tape recorder, in order to try to make sense of experience. This is an ingenious way of creating parallels between Krapp's attempts to create coherence or derive insight from his temporally disparate selves as captured on his archive of annual tape recordings — Van Hulle cites Henri Bergson in his discussion of various models of consciousness and memory that Beckett drew upon — and the work of the genetic critic, sifting through the temporal layers of the genesis of the play manifest in diverse manuscript, typescript, proof or published versions or in production notes gathered from many different archives.

My only reservations in this impressive volume are from a theatrical perspective. Though Van Hulle acknowledges the embodied action implied in the enactive mind, his interpretation does not always account for the dramatic qualities of the play. There are fascinating notes reproduced from the first French production of *La Dernière Bande* and a comparison of certain moments of staging in the section which analyses the notes that Beckett sent to Grove Press in January 1969, in relation to a possible TV version of KLT with Martin Held, but more references to Beckett's directing notebooks (published by Faber and Faber under the general editorship of James Knowlson) might have added to Van Hulle's discussion of the epigenesis or post-publication life of the text in relation specifically to staging. However, Van Hulle does include very illuminating and meticulous tables of the textual variants and errors in different translations and editions of the printed text. The invaluable resources in this book and the BDMP project will be drawn upon by scholars for decades to come. The volume is a rich addition to Beckett Studies and to genetic criticism.

Bibliography

Gontarski, Stanley E. 1985. *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts*. No. 133. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press

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